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COVER PICTURE

Interior view of residence for Donald and Nancy Begin at Topsfield, Mass. Russell S. Harmon, AIA, Architect.

New Hampshire Architect is published monthly, under the direction of the president and board of directors of the New Hampshire Chapter, American Institute of Architects, to promote the objectives and public relations of the chapter. Advertising rates furnished upon request.

AMERICAN COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE

by

Russell Sanborn Harmon, A. I. A.

In this age of skeptical "togetherness," space capsules, nucleonics and psychosomatic neuroses let us briefly consider the virtues of true "American Colonial" architecture,—more particularly as applied in a domestic sense to New England.

We have no quarrel with those progressive, up-to-the-minute modern individualists who "fit the structure to the site" by diverting the brook into the living room or encouraging the growth of trees through the roof. Nor do we feel pugnacious toward the strong exponents of the sprawling "ranch type" structure,—whether it be domestic, cultural, religious, industrial or commercial. It is also agreed that the urban multi-storied structures with their gleaming facades of bronze, glass, steel and aluminum well reflect their places in the sun!

Although many of us profess admiration and appreciation of the works of

Bullfinch and Jefferson, in reality we are delighted with the design and are awed at the artistry of the finished product. By to-day's standards we realize that in many instances, the colonial builder or architect utilized the materials at hand to the best of his ability. If the floor timbers were overstressed or the roof purlins overspaced, the ravages of time took their toll. Yet, to-day, in most New England towns, and cities one can find beautiful pre-Revolutionary structures as sound as the day they were built of hand-hewn timbers and hand-made bricks. However, the heavy wooden posts, beams, rafters and purlins of colonial days have given way to more economical and properly designed wood, steel and even aluminum structural members. The widespread accepted use of diagonal boarding and adequately sized plywood has practically eliminated the once essential corner and knee bracing. The artificial stone blocks are a far cry from the hand-made bricks and bulky field stone of yesterday. Thus it is seen that improved technology and code requirements have consigned the often found bulging walls and sagging floor systems to innocuous desuetude. Hence we find a natural and normal development of structural integrity emanating from the strong and rugged experiments of our fore-fathers. This broad background has been presented to emphasize the solid foundation upon which "American Colonial" architecture was developed,—and to indicate its contribution to the growth of other trends and types in the architectural field.

(Continued on Page 1)

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ANNUAL MEETING MAY 19

The annual meeting and election of officers of New Hampshire Chapter, AIA will be held at the New Hampshire Highway Hotel at Concord on Thursday evening, May 19. Arrangements are in charge of Arnold Perreton, AIA, of Concord.

Further details of the meeting will be announced by Secretary Andrew C. Isaak.

Richard Koehler, Norman P. Randlett and Stephen P. Tracy are serving on the nominating committee to bring in a slate of new officers.

BRADT OPENS OFFICE AT EXETER

Announcement has been made that effective March 1, Horace G. Bradt, formerly of Bradt, Littlefield and Williams of Dover, has opened an office for the practice of architecture at Exeter.

Willis Littlefield and Walter T. Williams will continue their offices at 2 Pierce Street, Dover, under the firm name of Littlefield and Williams.

OPEN MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Northern Association of Subcontractors, which was formed last October, has launched a membership drive, details of which were outlined at a meeting the officers and directors held recently at the Hanover Inn at Hanover.

C. Bader Brouillette of Burlington, Vermont, president of the association, stated that all sub-contractors working under a prime contractor, are eligible for membership, adding that the new association is composed of subcontractors in New Hampshire and Vermont.

All subcontractors in the two-state area, are to be contacted personally by an authorized representative of the association, Mr. Brouillette said. A goal of more than 100 members is sought during the next three months, when the new members will be given a reception at the firm's annual outing to be held in mid July.

The officers and directors will meet on Thursday, April 21 at 2 P. M., at the Hanover Inn, to receive reports of progress of the membership drive.

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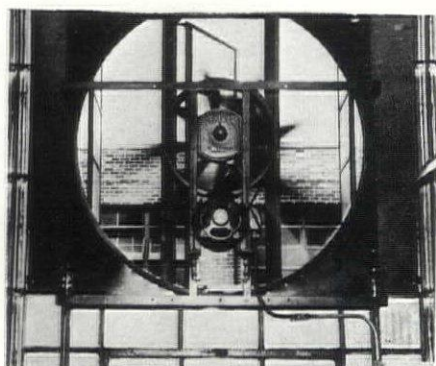
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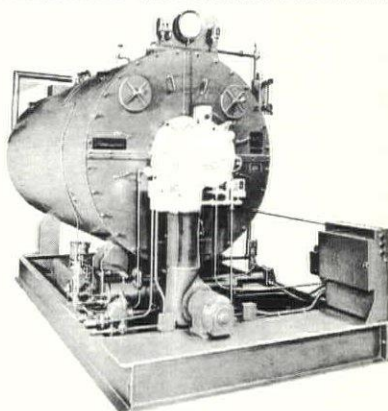
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(Continued from Page 6)

The acumen of our New England ancestors is well demonstrated in the careful consideration given to fenestration, particularly on northern exposures where the windows were small, few and far between. Interior shutters, aside from their protective function against the indian arrows and the wintry blasts, served to minimize interior heat from the summer's sun. Therefore, one sees a strange similarity in the economical design of many of to-day's heated and air-conditioned structures in the use of appropriate fenestration. As for insulation, suffice it to say that the need was recognized and that some diminution of cold infiltration and increased draft stoppage resulted from the banking of pineneedles, leaves, straw or sawdust against a structure's exterior at the first floor level. That the problems of ventilation and condensation were recognized is well demonstrated by many instances of well ventilated spaces under the eaves and near the ridgepoles.

At this point, and at the very real risk of being dubbed a "copyist," this writer invites thoughtful reflection on certain basic types of "American Colonial" architecture, such as: Georgian, Cape Cod, New England Farm, Garrison and Salt-Box. It is recognized that climate, needs of the occupant and other very real contemporary living factors contributed to the birth and growth of each "style." After this pause that refreshes, may we continue to indulge in our own personal reverie?

Often the kitchen was the first enclosure to be built and the huge fireplace, in which cooking efforts of the early days were centered, served well to reduce the discomforts of winter weather. Although to-day's "lebens raum" establishes the size of the major food preparation area, the kitchen fireplace has graduated to the stove which in turn has blossomed into the built-in oven and counter-top grill. The one time trend to "step-saver" kitchens, except for the most part in small homes and economy apartments, is swinging now to the larger "farm type" where the modern home-

maker has room for such up-to-date culinary conveniences as her heart desires. Her wall desk with planning appurtenances and a dining area or snack bar. As a reminder of early Americana is needed, one has but to reconsider the built-in barbecue to realize that to-day's luxury was a necessity in olden times.

The open, beamed or cathedral ceiling found in contemporary work were not unknown to our eighteenth century ancestors. The expressive strength of the colonial hand-hewn exposed timber utilized by many of to-day's architects emphasize a feeling of structurally sturdy warmth. The modern cliché of using the "ridge-to-ground" inverted "V" roof exemplified in the Jackson House (1755) at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The leaded glass windows, massive sills and wide floor boards of this rugged relic are impressive to even the most casual visitor.

With all due allowance and credit to the architects of a long gone Roman civilization and to the creators of the Greek baths, it was the primitive ingenuity of the early settlers in this country that started "American" plumbing on its way to fame. Many of us remember the "bath chamber" and the detached "three hole" which in cold weather could be dependent upon to generate those never to be forgotten chills and shivers! So it was the built-in wooden seat, with vertical piping to the cess-pool, worked very well when given a healthy douse with a bucket of water,—which bucket had to be filled at the well by the user after use. Before the break of dawn the commode with its plain or flowered basin and pitcher, augmented with a "thunder-jug" proved its real worth as a convenient adjunct and fore-runner to the natural evolution of the "running water" bathroom,—which to-day knows no bounds.

For a moment let us consider the parlour which was kept isolated except for the most formal occasions,—usually weddings and funerals. The Warner House (1715) Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which is a fine early colonial brick mansion, has w-

(Continued on Next Page)

ghteen inches thick beautifully paneled
its parlor. Thus we see the parlor
hich has gradually been transformed
to the family or activities room where
-day its potential is fully appreciated by
l members of the family. The old
itting" room, often with its fireplace or
t-bellied stove, has become the living
om,—minus the stove but often with
e fireplace.

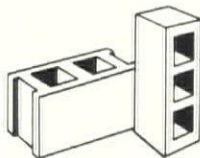
While the beauty of a delicately carved
mantel, such as is found in the Moffat-
Ladd House (1763), Portsmouth, New
Hampshire, is recognized, none but the
very wealthy could afford similar work-
manship in these times,—even if a com-
petently competent craftsman could be
located. While not depending upon the
hearth for warmth now-a-days, there is
certain harmony of decor in modified
colonial mantels of painted or warm
potted pine, strong rugged oak, blushing
red cherry, deep rich walnut, soft restful
mahogany and many other more or less
exotic woods. The hearth, whether
raised or at the floor level, often follows

ideas of our ancestors to express the
character of the occupant. Frequently
one finds in to-day's homes above the
mantel a cupboard which in colonial times
was known as the "parson's cabinet" and
was used to conceal the spiritus frumenti
when the preacher was seen arriving by
buggy, afoot or on horseback. To-day the
open "parson's cabinet" door permits
madam to display to advantage her Hum-
mels, pieces of Dresden or other valuable
heirlooms.

The spacious reception hall and the
exquisite grand staircase of the Moffat-
Ladd House are outstanding indications
of gracious colonial living. With relative
construction costs of material and labor
being what they are to-day, it is recog-
nized that normally one finds it uneconom-
ical to invest in the delicately turned
balustrades, finely delineated interior
trim, beautiful parquetry and other de-
sirable elements in vogue when arts and
crafts bore a different ratio to building
costs than they do to-day. We will admit

(Continued on Page 21)

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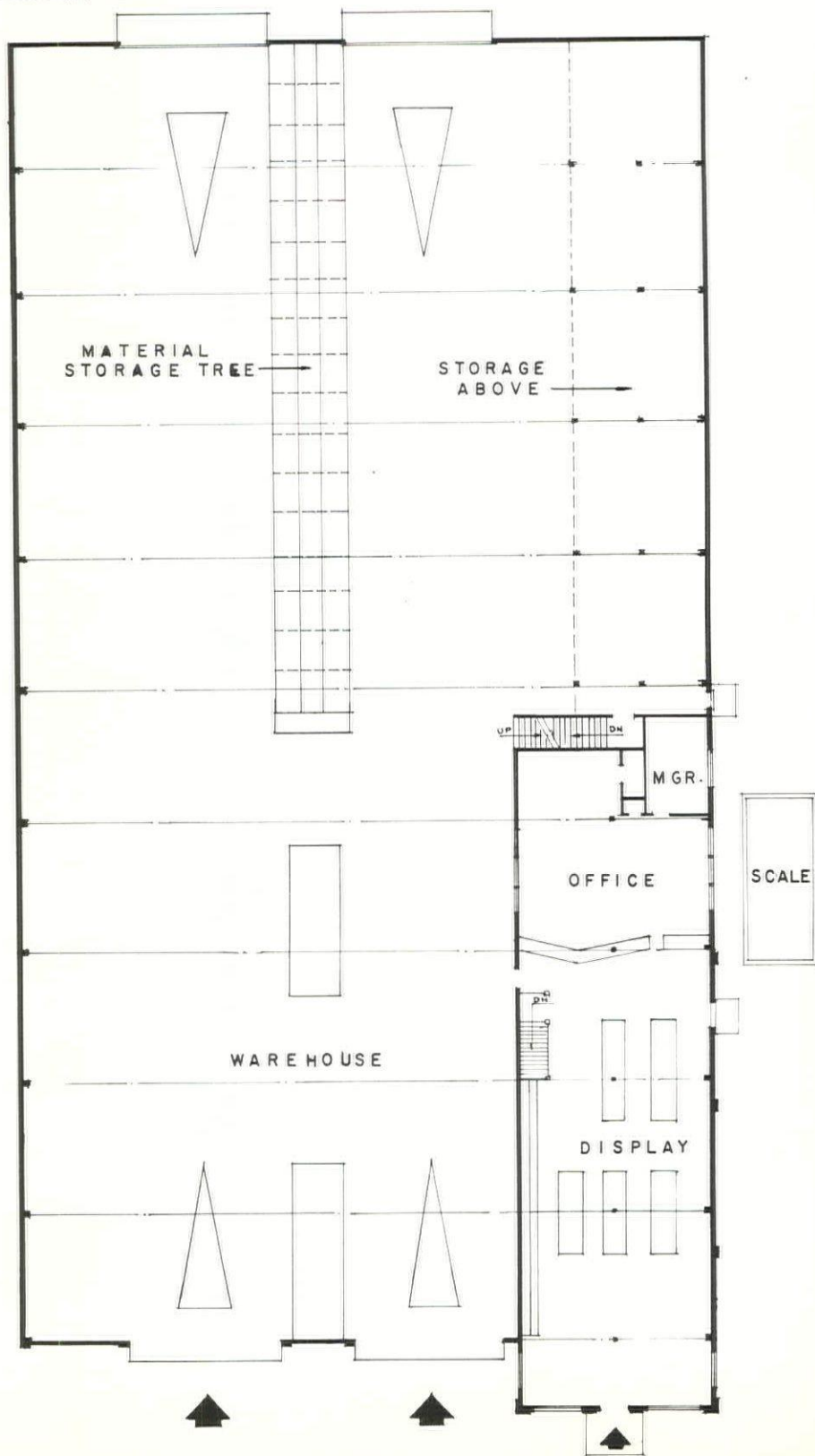
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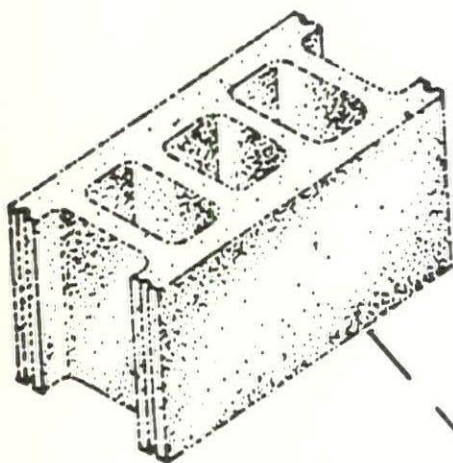
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MANCHESTER ARCHITECTS AT CONVENTION

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Lampron and Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Isaak, all of Manchester, are in attendance at the national convention of the American Institute of Architects at San Francisco this week.

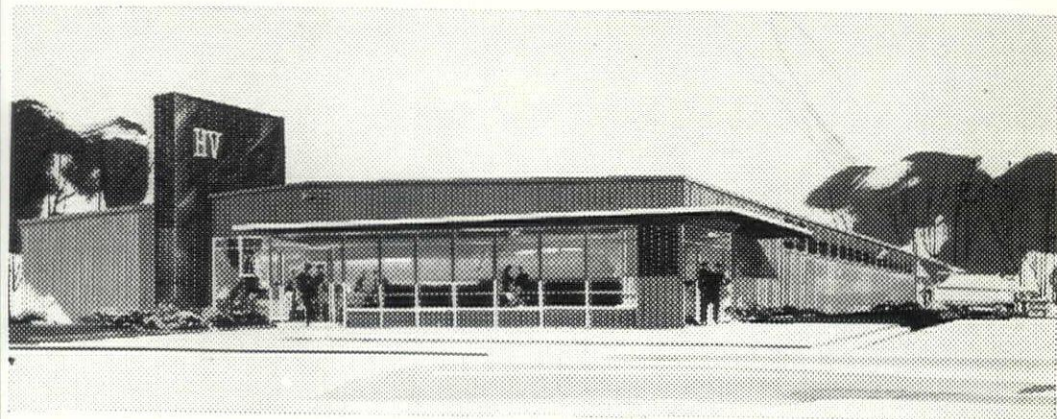
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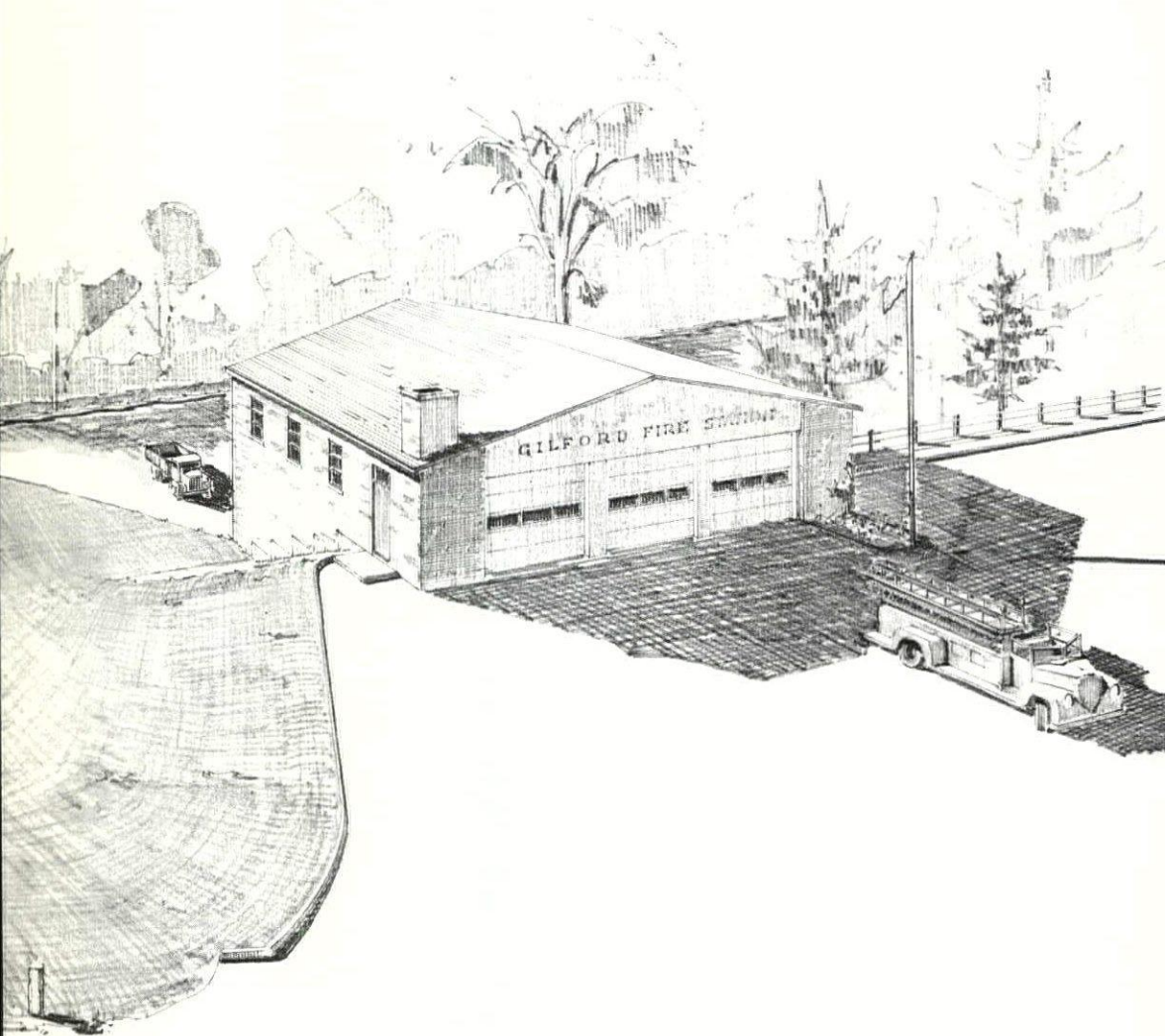
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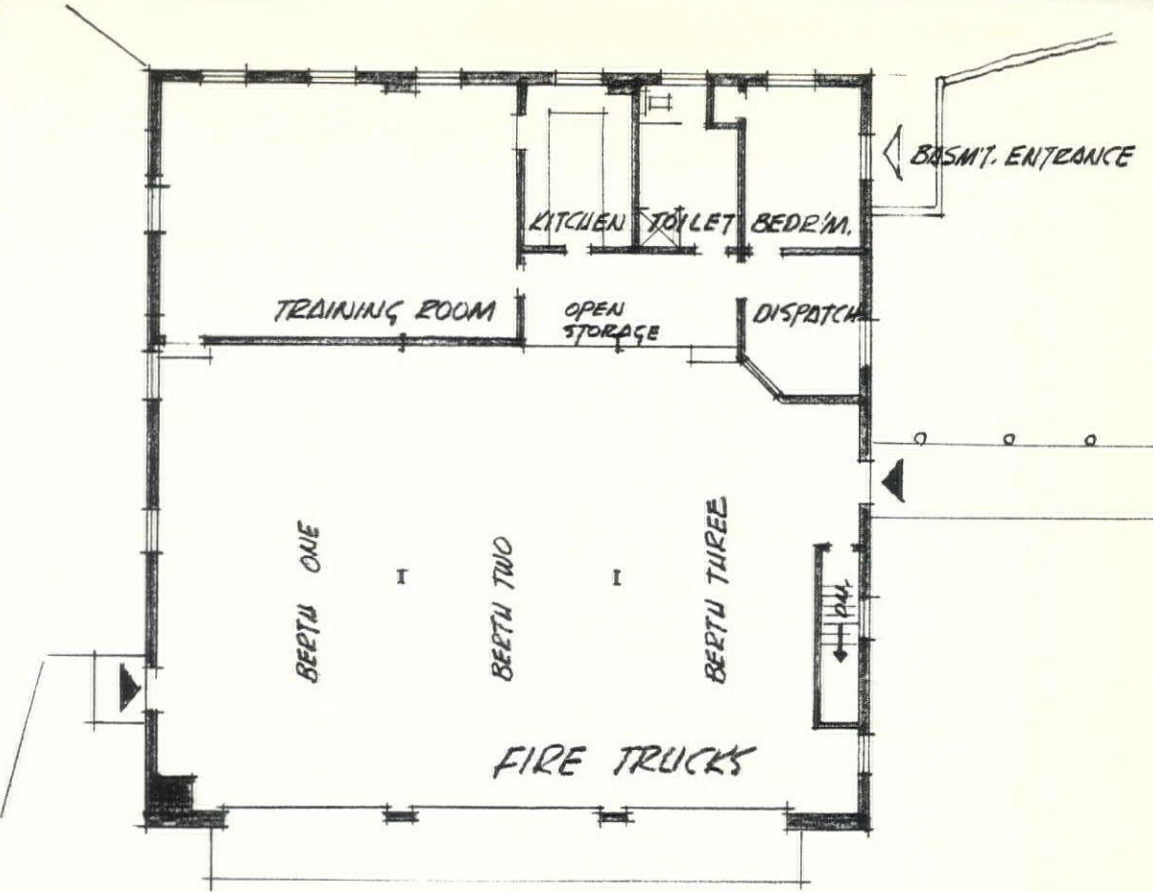
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As time moved on, Don and his charming wife, Nancy, blessed with three lively youngsters, began to think seriously of the future. In becoming realistically practical, they soon acquired a field-stone walled site on a rolling hillside in historic Topsfield, Massachusetts,— and began to plan their home.

The large glass areas of the living and play rooms look out upon beautiful apple blossoms in the spring, colorful gardens in the summer and the sloping snow-clad hillsides of winter. Graceful entertaining on the well shaded patio is a natural for summer evenings. The two-car heated garage is a boon to the "bird-man" who has to "go when called." Nancy's kitchen has proven to be a joy; and the children have all the room they need for play, study and rest.

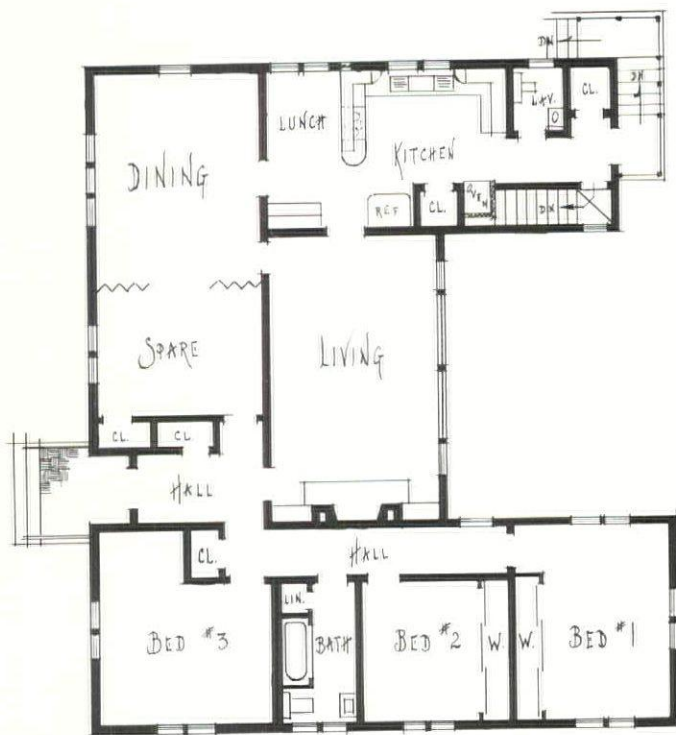
Many colonial features have been adapted, modified and blended to provide for gracious living in this home of modern charm. Don and Nancy now can live as they please,— relax, work, play and entertain to their heart's content.





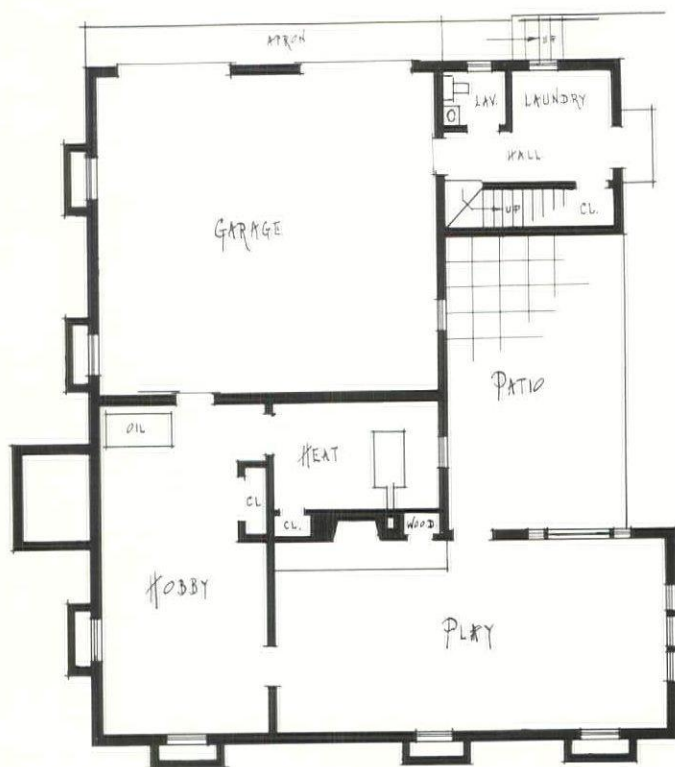
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FLOOR PLAN

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BASEMENT

(Continued from Page 11)

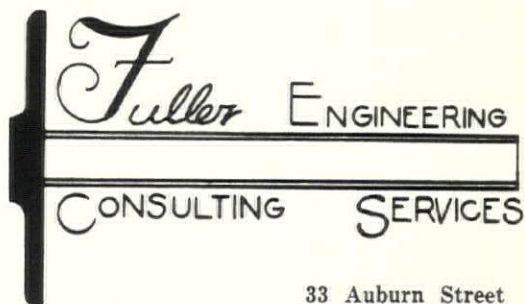
at the Doric, Ionian, Corinthian and Composite Orders are things of beauty and joys forever,—yet even they may be appropriately simplified and made compatible with the economics of modern construction. Although the use of wood shingles and hair plaster has been relegated to the past, to-day's chemists have come up with wall finishes which appear similar to those which are structurally better than those of our predecessors.

During our coffee break let us go back almost two centuries and marvel at the quiet dignity of crinoline days so well reflected in the Lady Pepperell House (1760), Kittery Point, Maine, and the Milton House (1770), South Berwick, Maine. Although we haven't mentioned the sleeping quarters of our colonial homes, in retrospect our imagination runs out in contemplation of life behind the beautifully proportioned dormers of, for example, some of these Portsmouth, New Hampshire homes: John Paul Jones (1758), Warner (1716), Governor Langdon (1784) and Moffat-Ladd (1763).

There appear to be many ways in which we can respect the foresight, research and development gained by our forefathers toward establishing a definite "American" form of architecture. By intelligent modification, reduction and even elimination of minute details, the "American Colonial" effect compatible with modern living can be obtained. Additions can be skillfully minimized and sized in many ways to create a "Colonial" appearance without indulging in sumptuous and costly perfectionism. The use of colored, enameled aluminum trim and screen sash and doors in no way reduces the cozy comfort of the small colonial type window panes needed to emphasize scale and beauty. And how many of us realize, when we drive the family car into our out of the garage, that pre-Revolutionary colonists used "overhead" doors? The application of enameled aluminum siding, shaped to a six-inch weather exposure, combined with basic aluminum trim, fascia and molding shapes are very real ways of

(Continued on Next Page)

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perpetuating what this writer likes to define as "American Colonial" architecture.

To summarize my thoughts, it would appear as financially absurd in to-day's operations to think of using egg-and-dart plaster mouldings as it would be to paint cupids on the ceilings or to stain glass the stair landing windows. Again it is said that these thoughts are intended in no way to belittle or antagonize the dedicated modernist or other contemporaries who go-for-broke toward the functional, square-lined boxy type of efficient structures,—which serve their purposes under certain requirements and conditions. So it is contended that main entrances of any scale can have simplified columns or pilasters without elaborate entablatures, that major proportional lines can be held by the use of simplified mouldings, that fine details can be combined and that a frieze can be pleasing and beautiful without tacking on a million dentils!

In conclusion, if this little tome starts a few gray cells working for or against the thoughts expressed here, we have accomplished our purpose. Finally, we believe that the homey, efficient comfort of to-day's structures, when based upon the cardinal principles of our ancestors as developed thru the years and kept compatible with the costs and needs of to-day's society, result in what we like to call "American Colonial" architecture,—which could aid considerably in the regeneration of our "dungaree dolls" and their "bearded beaus" before or after they commit matrimony.

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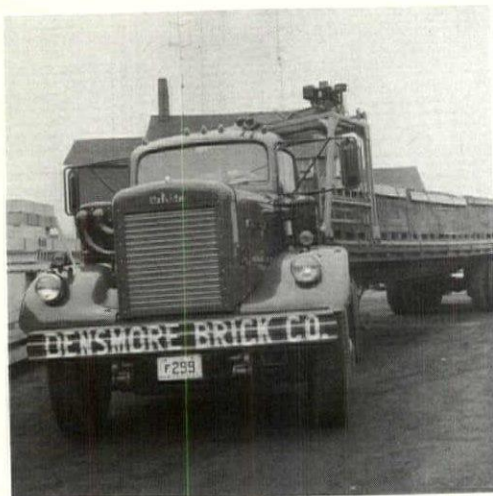
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